United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1234
25 September 1992

F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

+ Secretary-General welcomes imminent meeting between President of South Africa F.W. de Klerk and African National Congress President Nelson Mandela; urges early attainment of democratic, non-racial and united South Africa.

+ Future of United Nations humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo remains in doubt because of continuing security concerns, says United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

+ General Assembly is addressed by Heads of State of Latvia, Ecuador, Mongolia and Georgia; Foreign Ministers of Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Spain, India and Turkey; heard statements yesterday by Foreign Ministers of Greece Dominican Republic, Zaire, Marshall Islands and Azerbaijan.

** Following meeting with Secretary-General, Foreign Ministers of five permanent Security Council members issue statement reviewing priorities of Organization over past year.

** Head of State of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, at press conference at Headquarters, reviews situation in his country, urges enhancement of role and responsibility of United Nations.

* * *

A United Nations spokesman announced last night that he had just been informed by Nelson Mandela, the leader of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), that a meeting was imminent between Mr. Mandela and South African President F.W. de Klerk.

The spokesman said the Secretary-General warmly welcomed the development and expressed his sincere appreciation for the perseverance and leadership shown by President de Klerk and Mr. Mandela in resolving difficulties that had arisen. The Secretary-General said he believed their meeting would help transform the political atmosphere in South Africa in a positive way and lead rapidly to the resumption of multilateral negotiations involving all parties concerned. The early attainment of a democratic, non-racial and united South

(more)

Africa was a goal of the utmost importance to the United Nations. The Organization would continue to further this objective in a constructive and understanding way, the Secretary-General said.

The African National Congress broke off talks with the South African Government after the massacre of nearly 50 men, women and children in the township of Boipatong in mid-June. In mid-July, the Security Council urged the South African Government to take immediate measures to stop the violence and bring those responsible to justice. In mid-August, the Council authorized the dispatch of 50 United Nations observers to South Africa. In addition, the Secretary-General designated former Under-Secretary-General Virendra Dayal as his Special Envoy, to hold follow-up discussions on ending the violence and resuming negotiations. Mr. Dayal travelled to South Africa last week.

* * *

The future of the United Nations humanitarian airlift to the besieged city of Sarajevo remains in doubt because of continuing security concerns, according to a press release issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) today.

While expressing support for the resumption of the airlift, which was suspended on 3 September following the downing of an Italian relief plane by a missile, participating nations have asked the UNHCR to seek further security assurances from the warring parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The High Commissioner, Sadako Ogata, on 19 September, recommended that the airlift be resumed as soon as possible because of the urgent need to stockpile supplies before the onset of winter. The UNHCR has recognized from the start that the airlift is a dangerous undertaking, one that can never be fully safe as long as the fighting continues.

* * *

Anatolijs Gorbunovs, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Latvia, drew the Assembly's attention this morning to the "serious issue" of foreign military forces still in its territory, as well as the large number of retired military persons for whom his small country, which only one year ago restored its independence, had been pressured to provide social guarantees.

He said Latvia had been denied the right to monitor those forces and asserted that the lack of control over that army, its chaotic demobilization and "wilful covert merging" with economic enterprises and civil institutions had created a threat of unsupervised arms transfers, even in international markets.

Calling on the United Nations to pay attention to both large and small States, Mr. Gorbunovs said it was his Government's opinion that the security of small States should be of central concern to the Organization since a balance of power or agreement on goals between small States and their larger neighbours did not exist at the present time.

(more)

The President of Ecuador, Sixto Durán Ballén, addressing the problem of the external debt, said that for the least developed countries that problem was just another of the serious difficulties preventing them from developing and reaching better living standards. It would be very promising to reach an agreement on the mechanisms to alleviate the problems; one of the solutions would be to convert the external debt into investment in social and economic development projects.

The Ecuadorian President went on to say that it seemed "paradoxical and serious" that those countries that most advocated the elimination of trade barriers still maintained and even created new situations of protectionism, or discrimination, which hampered access to their markets for the products of developing countries.

The recent breakup of the Soviet Union had opened up a space for the fresh rivalries to appear, Eduard Shevardnadze, Chairman of the State Council of the Republic of Georgia, explained in his address this morning. Due to their political, economic and military weakness, the new States of the Caucasus were currently incapable of filling the vacuum and creating reliable guarantees of their own security. The newly emerged vacuum was also being used by the internal destructive groups which, under the guise of nationalist, pseudo-patriotic, separatist and even religious slogans, pursued their political objectives based on self-interest.

All that was making itself felt with varying degrees of clarity in the activities of the so-called "Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus", which had attempted to encroach upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, he said. Under the guise of volunteers, it had sent "hundreds of mercenary assassins" to Georgia. At the same time, Mr. Shevardnadze said, the leadership of the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic was infringing upon the rights of another ethnic group, which constituted half of the population of Abkhazia. That had led to inter-ethnic tensions and dramatic confrontations, he said.

The Georgian President called for the creation of a Trans-Caucasian mechanism of consultation, with the formation of a system of collective security in the Black Sea-Caucasus region. He also expressed his Government's support for the effort to draft a declaration on the rights of minorities. Such a text, he said, must contain an article on the responsibility of minorities for the maintenance of peace and stability in the territory in which they lived.

Communism had tied up nations with the false idea of proletarian internationalism, and that idea had necessarily affected relations between the Czechs and the Slovaks, Jozef Moravcik, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovakia, told the Assembly.

One way to resolve the problems that had arisen between the two peoples over the 74 years of coexistence within a common State lay in the replacement of the existing federalist pattern by new ties. Czechoslovakia was therefore preparing to establish two closely interconnected sovereign states "by

(more)

creating a common economic space and keeping in their entirety dense human contacts between people living in both republics". Czechoslovakia was now undergoing a process aimed at creating a solid basis for such a model of integration, which had been developing in Western Europe under democratic circumstances.

Globalism and nationalism were not opposing trends, Mr. Moravcik noted, adding that the world was characterized by an era of global integration comprising different sub-systems in which the United Nations had a irreplaceable role to play.

Mr. Moravcik also expressed his Government's full support for the United Nations peace-keeping operations, emphasizing the importance of Czech and Slovak contingents in such operations.

The Foreign Minister of Egypt, Amre Moussa, said that while most Middle East Arab and Non-Arab States had joined the international system of inspection or the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), one State had not. That State, which possessed a massive arsenal of military industries, was causing many security concerns, as it seemed to be engaged in a process of missile development process that threatened the whole concept of regional and international disarmament. Furthermore, he said, it would also restrict the freedom of the region's States to accede to the new convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons.

On the question of Palestine, Mr. Moussa welcomed the Rubin Government's move "in the right direction" which, he said, had created a basis of credibility for the current Middle East negotiations. It was important, he added, that the Arab parties, particularly Syria, had agreed to enter into comprehensive peace agreements with Israel provided that the latter adhered to its obligation under the Charter and international law.

The Egyptian Foreign Minister called upon Iran to reconsider its position on the occupation of the Arab islands, the latest of which was Abou Moussa Island, and to demonstrate good-neighbourliness by returning the area to its previous status. He also called on the international community to protect Iraq's territorial integrity and the unity of its people. Egypt also supported Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its international borders.

Calling on countries "in a position to do so" to look for new ways of dealing with the task of attaining sustainable development and assigning greater financial resources to it, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain, Javier Solana, this afternoon announced that his country, which had tripled its official aid in that area over the past ten years, had made a commitment to triple that aid again over the course of the coming decade.

The Foreign Minister also expressed support for the establishment of a high-level commission on sustainable sevelopment as agreed during the Summit segment of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro last June.

(more)

Turning to the issue of the decolonization of Gibraltar, Mr. Solana restated his Government's willingness to continue negotiating with the United Kingdom. He called the Gibraltar's colonial status "anachronistic and inappropriate to the times in which we live" and expressed hope that the efforts of Spain and the United Kingdom would soon lead to a definitive solution to that question.

In his address to the Assembly this afternoon, President Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat of Mongolia said that with the disintegration of the former Soviet Union into independent States, and the incorporation of those new States in the international community, Central Asia was once again emerging as a separate geopolitical entity. He stressed his country's intention to develop trade and economic relations with the nations of the region on the basis of "mutual benefit" and to participate actively in the international division of labour that was taking place there. Institutions such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC) were facilitating such a process.

President Ochirbat also said that Mongolia, which was situated between two permanent members of the Security Council -- Russia and China -- supported for the development of balanced relations with these two countries. The withdrawal of Russian troops, in line with the agreement reached by Mongolia and Russia, was under way.

In his statement to the Assembly, Eduardo Faleiro, Minister of State for External Affairs of India, called for an expansion of the membership of the Security Council to reflect the increased membership of the United Nations over the past few years. Such an expansion was all the more essential if the Council was to ensure its moral sanction and political effectiveness, he said.

Turning to the issue of disarmament, Mr. Faleiro stated that there should be no discrimination between nuclear weapon States and non-nuclear weapon States when it came to rights and obligations. The international community's efforts should be directed towards eliminating the global menace of the spatial spread of nuclear arsenals. As part of that, he continued, regional non-proliferation could be considered within the context of a properly region, and taking into account the security concerns of the countries concerned.

In his statement, Hikmet Cetin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, said the search for a negotiated settlement of the Cyprus question was continuing. The proximity talks which began in June had registered "some progress" and had resulted in the onset of face-to-face talks between the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. That positive turn of events, he said, had been achieved in great part owing to the constructive contribution of Rauf Denktas, but much remained to be done.

He expressed the hope that sufficient ground would be prepared before the resumption of the direct talks in October so that an early completion of the work on the "set of ideas" would be possible. He reiterated his Government's determination to participate in the four-party conference proposed by the Secretary-General to conclude an overall framework agreement.

(more)

Concerning the Yugoslav crisis, the Turkish Foreign Minister underscored his Government's special concern for the suffering of the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While supporting other efforts to reach a peaceful agreement in the region, he said, Turkey had also proposed a set of "concrete and effective measures" designed to stop the fighting in that country.

Turning to the situation in the Caucasus, Mr. Cetin said Armenia should disengage from Nagorno-Karabakh and withdraw its forces from Azerbaijani territory. He urged the parties to achieve a negotiated political solution based on the respect for the inviolability of international borders and respect for minority rights.

Over the past year, the Irish Government had worked "tirelessly" for the resumption of political dialogue which might lead to a lasting and comprehensive settlement of the problem of Northern Ireland, David Andrews, inister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, told the Assembly. The objective of that process was to achieve a "new beginning for relationships within the island of Ireland" and between the peoples concerned, he said.

Such a settlement could only be achieved on the basis of the equal legitimacy of the two traditions which exist on the island, he said. The nationalist and unionist traditions were equally valid and should be accorded equal respect and meaningful political expression in new political arrangements, he added.

The Irish Government, he said, had made it clear that it would be prepared to consider a new and more broadly based agreement or structure if such an arrangement could be reached through direct discussion and negotiation among all the parties concerned. The present talks were exploring that possibility, he said.

It was high time for Greece and Turkey to find a way, on the basis of international law and international conventions and treaties, to establish closer relations, the Foreign Minister of Greece, Michael Papaconstantinou, told the Assembly yesterday. He also stressed the determination of his Government to find a proper solution -- based on all relevant United Nations resolutions - to the problem of Cyprus, which had exercised a negative influence on bilateral relations. The "set of ideas" submitted by the Secretary-General, should form the basis of negotiations during the follow-up talks scheduled to be resumed in late October.

Yugoslav crisis, he continued, remained a potential danger for destabilization of the whole Balkans, and a danger for peace and security in the wider area. Mr. Papaconstantinou expressed full support for the joint United Nations and European Community chairmanship of the International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, which represented "the only hope for a lasting settlement".

The Greek Foreign Minister reiterated his country's opposition to the international recognition of the Republic of Macedonia under a name that

(more)

included the term "Macedonia". It was more than anything a matter of political realism; the usurpation of a Greek name and of ancient Greek emblems combined with constitutional provisions insinuating territorial expansion were nothing but clear indications of territorial claims, he said.

Juan Aristides Taveras Guzman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Dominican Republic, focused on economic conditions in his country , stressing the decline in its trade balances as a result of protectionist practices and other restrictions. Resources had been reduced and the economy of the country had had to be adjusted, he said, adding that sustainable recovery could only be reached by increased confidence and greater foreign exchange investment.

With regard to Haiti, the Foreign Minister said the democratic experiment under President Jean-Bertrand Aristide had been cut short. The Dominican Republic was providing the facilities for negotiation and dialogue in support of a speedy restoration of normalization in Haiti.

He also told the Assembly that the Dominican Republic had been taking forceful steps to deal with the problem of drug trafficking and was set to accede to the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

Pierre Lumbi Okongo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zaire told the General Assembly yesterday that in the spirit of global solidarity, the developed countries should provide aid, derived from military cut backs to the countries of the South. He acknowledged, however, that underdevelopment would not disappear because of such an effort and said what was needed were real strategies to reduce the misery of the people in Africa and other developing countries.

The Foreign Minister said that collective security was not only affected by military conflicts, but also by the increasing poverty in the world, which was worsened by high population growth and the burden of external debt. Without real cooperation by the industrialized countries, he said, as well as greater planning, any effort to revitalize the economies of developing countries would be in vain.

Zaire, which had been undergoing a multisectoral crisis for some time, due to "disastrous management of human and material resources", desired change, he explained, noting that his Government had now opened the way for democratic political reforms.

The people of the Marshall Islands had been following with great interest the scientific debate over global warming, Tom Kijiner, Foreign Minister of that country, said yesterday. If global warming endangered certain regions and certain modes of life, he continued, the risks had to be confirmed and the citizens informed. An environment at risk would be a significant constraint for the developing nations in the late twentieth century. Nevertheless, he stressed, concern for the environment need not put a halt to the development. Instead, It should be part of the overall situation to which individuals responded with creativity and productivity.

(more)

The right of nations to self-determination could be realized only by peaceful means, Tofik Gassymov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, told the Assembly yesterday. Only a nation, and not a national minority, had that right. Realization of the right to self-determination should not violate the rights of other nations, their sovereignty and integrity.

Mr. Gassymov indicated that Armenia was pursuing a policy of dividing the Azerbaijani State and of capturing its territories. Armenia had initiated the conflict in Upland Karabakh, which was "an indivisible part" of Azerbaijan. The Armenian minority in that region had autonomy, he said. He recalled that from the very beginning of the conflict, his country had called for an end to the hostilities and a peaceful settlement through negotiations. Every time, he said, Azerbaijan's efforts had been blocked by the silence of Armenia. He called for the complete withdrawal of Armenian armed formations from Azerbaijan as a condition for creating a stable cease-fire under international monitoring. There must also be repatriation of refugees to their places of permanent residence and normalization of life in the affected areas.

* * *

The foreign ministers of the five permanent Security Council members today issued a statement today following a meeting with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali reviewing the priorities of the Organization over the past year.

In the statement, Qian Qichen of China, Roland Dumas of France, Andrei V. Kozyrev of the Russian Federation, Sir David Hannay of the United Kingdom (representing Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd) and Lawrence S. Eagleburger of the United States welcomed the Secretary-General's report, "An Agenda For Peace", and pledged their support for a further discussion of the report with a view to a rapid and concrete follow-up.

The foreign ministers also expressed their deep concern over the situation in Yugoslavia, calling upon all the parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina to stop military actions immediately. They deplored persistent Iraqi non-compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions and expressed deep concern at the deteriorating conditions affecting the safety of United Nations personnel in Iraq.

While welcoming the progress made by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in implementing the Paris Agreements on a comprehensive settlement in that country, the five foreign ministers expressed deep concern over the difficulties UNTAC faced. They expressed support for the Secretary-General's efforts to assist fact-finding and reconciliation of the parties in Moldova, Georgia and Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as for his efforts in securing a peaceful transition of power to the Government in Afghanistan.

On the situation in South Africa, the foreign ministers expressed deep concern about the recent escalation of violence and urged the Government of South Africa to take effective measures to stop it. Addressing the tragedy in

(more)

Somalia, they urged the Secretary-General to continue cooperating closely with regional organizations in efforts to reach a political settlement.

* * *

At a press conference today following his first address to the General Assembly as Head of State of newly independent Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze said his country had decided not to enter the Commonwealth of Independent States and expressed "moderate pessimism" as to the future development of the Commonwealth. The Georgian leader, stressed, however, that Georgia would cooperate literally with Commonwealth members in areas such as the economy, monetary and financial relations.

Expanding on his remarks in the Assembly concerning the role of the United Nations in protecting of the rights of the majority over the dictatorship of minorities in Georgia, he said the main concern of the Organization should be to defend human rights and to ensure that there was no infringement on the rights of any people or nation regardless of whom they represented.

Noting that "an army of refugees" consisting of tens of thousands of people had been appearing in the Caucasus for almost four years, Mr. Shevardnadze said Georgia had not felt any impact from the United Nations in the Caucasus. He called for enhancement of the role and responsibility of the entire structure of the United Nations to make it more effective so that people and States "feel the work" of the Organization.

On the question of Russian forces in Georgia, he said negotiations between Russia and Georgia would begin after the scheduled elections. The draft of a major treaty on the principles of mutual relations between the Russian leadership and Georgia had been prepared, he said.

* * *

CORRECTION TO THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS:

The Committee on the Rights of the Child begins its second session on Monday, 28 September.

* *** *